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COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM  
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## ***“Law Enforcement and the Fight Against Methamphetamine”***

*conducted by the United States House of Representatives  
Committee on Government Reform  
Subcommittee on Criminal Justice, Drug Policy, and Human Resources*

Offered for consideration by

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Distinguished members of Congress, panel members, guests and other interested parties, I am honored to have been asked to assume a role in this undertaking. I applaud the interest of this subcommittee to begin a dialogue of all community members who have an interest in making our society less burdened by the horrible drug known as methamphetamine. I have been involved in the Kansas criminal justice system for over twenty two years in roles which include city patrolman, deputy sheriff, D.A.R.E. officer, probation officer and currently serve as sheriff of Rice County, Kansas. Rice County covers 750 square miles for which I, along with four other deputies, are responsible. However, I am the only technician certified to investigate, dismantle and clean up clandestine methamphetamine laboratories. I routinely initiate action to bring methamphetamine producers to justice through the seeking out and execution of search warrants. The meth problem consumes a majority of my time each day. When we assemble the community affected by methamphetamine, it brings many players to the table due to the unique characteristics of this problem. Why is that?

First, the process by which this drug is produced is readily available. It does not discriminate, nor does it require any specialized education or training. The manner or “recipe” used to produce methamphetamine is readily available on the internet. Sharing “recipes” is a source of pride for “cooks” who take great satisfaction in making improvements to old standards, in discovering new techniques to increase yields, and in creating a product with a higher purity level. There is a sense of showmanship amongst those involved in the production of methamphetamine.

Secondly, the items or “ingredients” necessary to manufacture methamphetamine can be easily obtained in many retail outlets. There is nothing required in the process that is not stocked in most stores in all towns across the United States. The products are common household goods which can be purchased without so much as the raising of a brow by the clerk operating the register. This fact draws retailers into the process of being a source for obtaining necessary precursors, reagents and solvents to manufacture methamphetamine with little or no awareness as to the role they are playing.

Thirdly, the drug itself knows no social, ethnic or gender boundaries. It victimizes all people, regardless of age, regardless of their address, regardless of their marital status. It does not care if you have children or dependents. With one or two encounters with the monster called methamphetamine, it will own you. It will control you. It will make your decisions for you. It will beckon you to steal, to abandon loved ones, to neglect your children, and to disregard your responsibilities such as work and family. It will cause you to seek medical attention. It will force your family to turn to social support systems for assistance.

Often people fail to appreciate the tremendous social costs caused by methamphetamine. It consumes a large portion of the criminal justice resources all across America. Not just in the investigative hours dedicated to combating the manufacturing of the drug but also in the judicial system. Property crimes increase as those who are addicted struggle to get their next fix. They turn to committing crimes to feed their addiction. There are a high percentage of those on probation and parole who have had involvement with the drug. The penal system is overburdened with those who manufacture, distribute or use of methamphetamine. Regrettably, there are not enough treatment beds in any area of the country to offer timely and adequate treatment opportunities. State social systems are being burdened by the influx of children of parents who have fallen victim to methamphetamine. They are now being referred to as DEC (drug endangered children). Specials programs are being created all across the country to deal with this new segment of society. Families are more victimized by violence and neglect. Caregivers begin to focus more on the drug than the family unit.

Law enforcement is looking for effective, efficient interventions to help our communities in the battle against methamphetamine. I would caution all of us from looking for the magic bullet, the quick fix, or the “too good to be true” solution. The scope of this problem is of a magnitude difficult to comprehend. There are many ideas, proposals, and suggestions offered in many forums. I will share an intervention being utilized in my jurisdiction which has proven effective. It has been implemented with minimal cost and has had many positive effects. This program is called *Meth Watch*.

*Meth Watch* is a community based program. It creates partnerships among citizens, retailers and law enforcement. It is through this comprehensive approach that

its success is found. *Meth Watch* was started several years ago based in response to the frustrations of two narcotics officers. They were becoming burned out and desired to spend more time with their young families and less time pursuing meth cooks. We took this concept and formulated a community team that was made up of people from all walks of life. It was comprised of law enforcement officers, prosecutors, retailers, school counselors, agriculture representatives and health professionals. We began with an initiative that involved educating the community on the problems, dangers and social costs associated with methamphetamine in our area. The media assisted in excellent coverage of all methamphetamine investigations. Mailing stuffers were created to inform the public. These stuffers were inserted in mailings already being sent by other entities such as banks and utility companies, saving the expense of postage. We held public informational meetings to expose the community to the facets of the meth problem. These meetings targeted those in positions likely to encounter methamphetamine production, such as utility meter readers, rural township road maintainers, mail carriers, home visitors such as social workers, teachers, and medical professionals. After we felt like we had created a heightened awareness, we began with the retail piece. This involved meeting with retail owners and managers to explain to them how their business was being exploited by those involved in the production of methamphetamine. We identified those retailers who had products used in the process. We asked them to join with us to combat this epidemic. Over ninety percent of those identified retailers agreed to partner with us. They were educated on the products in their inventory which are used in the process. We trained them on suspicious transactions. Behaviors and ploys used by those collecting the necessary items for the manufacturing process were explained. We showed them how to minimize loss due to shoplifting by relocating targeted merchandise near registers and limiting the number of items displayed on shelving units. We suggested limiting the number of items, such as medicines containing pseudoephedrine, that a consumer may purchase during a single visit. A training video was distributed for use when training employees on what to be aware of. After these steps were completed their stores were ready for marking. Decals were placed on the entrance doors clearly stating they participated in the *Meth Watch* program. Products used in the process are clearly marked with shelf tags to warn those

attempting to collect them that employees are watching such purchases. Colorful posters showing all products used in the process are posted in break room areas of the store for employee's constant review. Information sheets are placed at check out stands for distribution to consumers who are interested in the actions being taken by the store to impact the methamphetamine problem. And finally, employees are trained to notify law enforcement immediately of any suspicious actions or purchases they observe. They are encouraged to collect and report descriptions of the persons involved as well as any vehicles they observe which may be used by the subjects.

Has *Meth Watch* been effective? The program has been very successful on many levels. Not only has it resulted in numerous arrests directly attributed to reports by retail clerks, as well as citizens, but it has formulated many beneficial partnerships. Relations between law enforcement and the community have never been better. Grants have been awarded for the development of programs directly based upon the collaborative efforts observed to be ongoing within the community created through the *Meth Watch* program. Through arrests of those involved in the production of methamphetamine, I have been told during interviews that they do fear being apprehended in retail outlets marked with the *Meth Watch* signage. The signage, when coupled with the high sense of paranoia felt by the addicts, is an effective tool. Individuals report driving to other areas where they felt less likely to be noticed, reported and arrested. We took the *Meth Watch* concept a step further than marking the retail stores- we marked the communities of the county. Those traveling our highways will see a *Meth Watch* sign posted at the city limits of our communities. We want to inform those traveling from community to community collecting products necessary for the production of methamphetamine that they need to keep on driving. That in this community they will be watched, their purchases will be noted and, if suspicious, law enforcement will be contacted.

We have found that through a community effort a problem can be addressed and a difference can be made. The implementation of the *Meth Watch* program was made available through a small grant of several thousand dollars. It is amazing what a small amount of seed money can do when combined with resourceful people who have identified a problem and have a plan of action.

Another approach being considered across the country in the rescheduling of pseudoephedrine. This is an effort to make obtaining the precursor much more difficult for those involved in manufacturing methamphetamine. With no doubt this will make it more difficult for *everyone* to obtain pseudoephedrine. While this will have a positive impact upon the battle against methamphetamine it will cause inconvenience upon society. The question is can you legislate addiction to methamphetamine? Has the increase in the term of incarceration for conviction of such crimes been effective? Will the relocating of the drug behind the counter and the required signature to purchase it be effective? I do not have definitive answers to the posed questions. I know that addicts will still need pseudoephedrine regardless of the barriers placed between them and it. I do not know the lengths they will go to in their efforts to obtain it. I would offer that without an electronic database on a national scale to identify and track suspicious quantity and frequency purchases of pseudoephedrine and ephedrine little may be gained. It is proven that those seeking the drug are willing to travel to obtain it so signing a log sheet at each pharmacy may do little to eradicate this unless there is a networking system included to identify such procurements.

I am encouraged by the development of a newly formulated anhydrous ammonia which will continue to make it a viable source of fertilizer in the agriculture community, yet make it ineffective when used in the process of manufacturing of methamphetamine. The theft of anhydrous ammonia in rural America is a daily occurrence and creates an environment which is very dangerous for those engaged in farming. I have recovered anhydrous ammonia in many varied containers ranging from fire extinguishers to insulated jugs. The news of an additive in anhydrous ammonia which discolors those who come into contact with it is an excellent tool for law enforcement. The product can be added into the anhydrous ammonia at a very minimal cost yet it offers excellent evidence towards the successful arrest and prosecution of those involved in the production of methamphetamine.

I have directly experienced positive results through legislation making the penalty for being involved in the use or production of methamphetamine severe. In Kansas, we have created laws which place those convicted of the crime of manufacturing methamphetamine behind bars for up to eleven years. Given the highly addictive nature

of the drug and the lack of success in the treatment of those addicted to methamphetamine, it is my experience that the only sure way to slow the spread of this crisis is through incarceration.

I do believe that the most effective course to be considered must be multi-faceted and comprehensive. I do not believe that one direction or one approach will offer success in this effort to reverse the current trend in our country in the production and use of methamphetamine. I feel the best chances of success will come at the local level with some national direction and leadership. The greatest resource found in our country is our people. I know we must include education, consider legislation, and continue holding people accountable for their choices to reverse this trend of drug use.

It is my hope that through the information shared in hearings such as this a course of action can be charted to assist all local, state and federal criminal justice partners, all communities, all families and individuals who feel victimized or impacted by this horrific drug.